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THE TRUE POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT RELATIVE TO THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR WITH A VIEW TO THE RESTORATION OF THE UNION.

SPEECH

OF

HON. ELIJAH WARD,

OF NEW YORK,

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 9, 1865.

The House having under consideration the motion to reconsider the vote by which the House on the 15th of last June rejected a joint resolution (S. No. 16) submitting to the Legislatures of the several States a proposition to amend the Constitution of the United States—

Mr. WARD said:

Mr. SPEAKER: It is not my intention to discuss at this time and place the causes which have inaugurated the terrible rebellion which has already cost the Republic such a frightful waste of life and treasure. It is enough for me to know that a death-blow has been aimed at the heart of the American Union, to feel indignant at the outrage and solicitous to avert it. It is enough for me to know that a sacrilegious attempt has been made to break up the wisest form of government that human wisdom ever devised, to feel it my duty to join in the effort to chastise the perpetrators of so great a crime. I have not approved of all that has been done under the sanction of the war power. I have deemed it proper to protest, in the name of the loyal and law-abiding constituency I have the honor to represent on this floor, against certain acts of the Executive and Congress, which, in my opinion, have been the means of prolonging this sanguinary war; but I am settled in the conviction that secession is treason, and that as such it must be put down at all hazards and at any cost. If secession succeeds, republican liberties are lost forever, and the Government, failing to vindicate its power, would forfeit the consideration and respect of every civilized nation on earth. If the heresy of secession were to be recognized as a canon of our political faith, there would be an end to our Government. Let Louisiana secede unhindered, and then, when that act has been accomplished, what is to prevent her from handing that State over to England or any other Power, commanding as she does the mouth of the great Mississippi? This she most assuredly has a right to do if she has a right to secede, thus closing up the "Father of Waters," and excluding all the States on its borders from a market. The same rule would apply to any other seceded State. Hence the duty of every American patriot, whatever his station or condition, to uphold the Government in its efforts to compel the seceded States to respect the Constitution and the laws of the country. Upon this conviction of duty I have ever acted since the first insult to our flag was offered. The same abiding sense of the responsibility which rests upon me as a Representative of the people in Congress will, I trust, carry me unflinchingly through whatever phase may yet remain undeveloped in the fearful drama which has been so long in process of action. If the conduct of the war had not been marked by some of the most startling usurpa-

tions of power that ever made a free people tremble for their liberties, my voice should never have been raised except in the way of encouragement and sympathy.

Much wonder has frequently been expressed, Mr. Speaker, that in this fearful crisis through which our bleeding country is now passing, in the awful presence of the grand and sublime uprising of the people of this nation, no master spirit has yet risen in the midst of our assemblage capable to stay the uplifted hand, and gifted with that peculiar sagacity which employs the acquired light of yesterday in the selection of a path for to-morrow. Whatever may be the cause, it cannot be denied that the present crisis has most signally failed in the production of those towering intellectualities whose impress never fails to mark itself deeply upon the mold of their times, and which during all our former trials as a nation have been wont to direct the destinies of the Republic triumphantly through the fiery paths of sedition and conspiracy. Hence the blunders and mismanagements which have characterized the conduct of this war. The spirit which was wont to kindle the voices of former statesmen as if with a coal from the altar is no longer manifest in the places of power. Under these circumstances, and in view of the obstacles which we may yet have to contend with before the blessings of peace can be restored to our distracted country, it behooves every man in the position I have the honor to occupy, however humble his pretensions or capacity, fearlessly to present his views on the great questions now at issue, in order that out of the very multitude of counsels some good and practical result may be attained.

I have observed that the more entirely the objects which stand in the way of the execution of any purpose are ignored, the more easy it becomes to lay down plans for the perfect management of the affairs of the country, military and financial. Overlook the rivers and the mountains, the distance and the atmospheric phenomena, the reluctance upon one side and the resistance upon the other, and to construct the most infallible programme for the suppression of the rebellion is one of the easiest of the undertakings. To overlook the laws of trade, the limits of the popular power, and the propensity of mankind to prefer their own to any other interest, and to prescribe a financial policy which shall carry the country safely through the war and its consequences is a work not above the powers of the most ordinary capacity. Individuals entirely able at a single effort or less to solve all the problems of our condition are easily to be found. The country is rather redundant of them than otherwise. They cross us on all sides, in the newspapers and on the street corners. But that which alike marks all their solutions is the omission of more or less and sometimes of all the real elements of the calculation. "On to Richmond" is easily said. "Order a levy *en masse*, and advance all along the line" is a suggestion so magnificent as to give an air of pusillanimity to the inquiry whether its execution is practicable. Issue legal-tender notes *ad libitum*, tax without measure, and borrow without limit, are pieces of advice which are all the more acceptable, perhaps, because they who propose them refrain from disclosing that there are points beyond which neither of these sources of revenue can be made available. For my own part, sir, I shall not take upon myself the invidious task of attempting to solve the perplexing problem of the war, nor yet of suggesting any panacea for the cure of existing evils. I simply desire to offer a few remarks which are forced upon me by the constantly recurring deviations from the avowed object for which this devastating war was originally and authoritatively declared to be waged. I feel that I am somewhat entitled to the indulgence of the House when I venture to raise my voice as a warning to those in power that the mass of the people no longer recognize them as their representatives in a glorious struggle; that they no longer consider the war as a war for the salvation of the country, but as having degenerated to a strife about a collateral issue utterly foreign to the cause which they entered so heartily to sustain.

Sir, when the rebellion first broke out I had the honor of being a member-elect of this body, and from the day that I took my seat on this floor I have never sought to embarrass the Government in its efforts to bring back the seceded States under the glorious flag of that Union which had protected them all so long and so well.

In the extra session of 1861, the House of Representatives declared by a solemn act "that the war was not waged upon our part in any spirit of oppression, nor for any purpose of conquest or subjugation, nor for the purpose of overthrowing or interfering with the established institutions of those States, but to defend and maintain the supremacy of the Constitution, and to preserve the Union with all the dignity, equality, and rights of the several States unimpaired." Had the noble and patriotic sentiments enunciated in that resolution been made the rule of action by both branches of the Government, the war

would, I believe, before this time have been terminated; for whatever may be said of the proud and indomitable spirit with which the people of the South have carried on the war, and of their attitude of haughty defiance, I am fully convinced that if the olive branch had been tendered in that spirit of magnanimity which becomes a dignified Government after it has vindicated its power, the repentant rebels, at least the greatest portion of them, seeing the folly of their ways, would long ere this have returned to their allegiance.

This Government did not begin the war. The seceded States, at the time the rebellion was inaugurated, had nothing to complain of; no overt act had been committed by the Government, none of their prerogatives had been interfered with, none of their citizens had been burdened by taxation, all their rights and institutions were under the protection of the United States. They have gone out from among us under the false pretense that they foresaw in the future that they should lose their just political power and influence in the Union, and acting upon this self-imposed delusion they have drawn the sword wantonly and willfully upon the Government and loyal people of the United States.

What I mean by the term olive-branch, sir, is the exhibition of a generous and conciliatory spirit, which I regret to say has not hitherto characterized our invitations to the people of the seceded States to come back and be restored to the inestimable privileges of American citizens. All our legislation on the subject, whether we look to the Confiscation bill, or to those other severe enactments which have called forth so much bitter acrimony on this floor, has been marked by a spirit of vindictiveness and oppression utterly unworthy of a great and a Christian nation. Even the proclamation of amnesty of President Lincoln fails to hold out any hope of satisfactory results, because its provisions are not in accordance with the fundamental principle of self-government, that the majority must rule.

There is in this plan for restoration so triumphantly heralded by the friends of the Administration an attempt at usurpation so offensive to the people that no mind regulated by the usual dictates of sanity and guided by the wisdom of the Constitution could ever have elaborated. The proposition made by the sole authority of the President to constitute one-tenth of the citizens of a State the whole State, is so preposterous that it can scarcely be regarded as serious. Were such a proposition to be acted upon, the Government would find itself placed even in a more awkward position than it occupies now, for it would have to maintain a standing army in each of the States thus surreptitiously brought into the Union, in order to protect the dominant minority from violent acts, on the part of that overwhelming majority which, by this anomaly in legislation, would be totally disfranchised.

Sir, I am as strongly opposed as any of my compeers on the other side of the House to the re-admission into the Union, with the right of slave property, of any State where slavery has been swept away by the onward march of our armies. Whatever may be the object of the war, the practical result is the same, and that is, the overthrow of slavery in all those portions of slaveholding territory which our armies subjugate; in these the relation of master and slave ceases to exist. The masters retreat as our forces advance, and carry with them a portion of their slaves, but the greater part remain behind and take refuge within our lines; and the question is, what shall become of them and what are our duties in regard to them? The American people have behaved admirably since this war broke out. They have shown an energy and elasticity of spirit, a power of organization and combination, a readiness to make sacrifices, a patriotic devotion, worthy of the highest praise. Let us not forget the claims of those unhappy freedmen whom we have deprived of their masters, their natural guardians and protectors.

The war is no longer waged for the purpose of restoring the union of all the sovereign States that are and ever were in our great national communion, with all the purity and strength of our precious Constitution undimmed and untarnished, but for the newly-avowed object of subjugation, extermination, and emancipation, until every Southron shall be reduced to the most crouching and abject submission, not to the Constitution, but personally to those who hold the sword and the purse of the country. Sir, I am not prepared to join in any such crusade. I occupy the same platform to-day that I did on the breaking out of the rebellion. I am in favor of a vigorous prosecution of the war, by all constitutional means, for the purpose of destroying the military power of the rebellion; but I am not willing to prolong this war a moment longer than is necessary to effect its legitimate object. The consequences of a mistaken policy are too serious to

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suffer me to be governed by the spirit of faction on the one hand or influenced by subserviency to power on the other. We have now arrived at that stage in the progress of the war when we should consider the question of offering to the people of the rebel States such conciliatory terms as are constitutional, just, and practicable, and most likely to lead to the re-establishment of the national authority over the whole country. The terms and conditions offered to the insurgents in the President's proclamation of amnesty are only calculated to inflame their hatred of the North and impel them to renewed resistance. They are flagrantly at variance with the declarations voluntarily made to the people of the loyal States and published to the world. I desire to see such terms offered as a proud and already chastened people can accept without positive degradation to themselves—terms which shall recognize the existence of the States with constitutions and forms of administrations—terms, in short, calculated to divide our enemies and draw the hearts of the repentant people of the decaying confederacy toward our Government. When these honorable terms are rejected, then I shall be willing to leave events to the harsh and cruel necessities of the justice which is vindicated by the sword.

But, sir, although the beneficent spirit which pervaded Mr. Crittenden's resolution to which I have referred, was not allowed to exercise its healthy influence over the deliberations of this body, its provisions were tacitly adopted as a governing principle in the conduct of the war—so much so, that when Generals Fremont, Hunter, and Phelps, issued their proclamations of emancipation, the President revoked them all, declaring again and again that he had no right under the Constitution to emancipate the slaves. Those who spoke in behalf of the Executive, and in elucidation of his views, stated everywhere—in the public streets, in conventions, and in the Legislatures—that the President was determined that the seceded States on re-entering the Union should be protected in all their rights. Governor Stanley, who travelled five thousand miles, it is supposed at the express request of the President, that he might try to persuade the people of North Carolina out of the rebellion, stated in his speech of June 17, 1862, delivered at Washington, North Carolina, that Mr. Lincoln was no abolitionist, that he was the best friend the South had, and that all the Administration wanted was peace. Governor Stanley spoke according to instructions, as many others had done before him in every section of the country, which had the effect of producing a strong feeling of reaction throughout the border States, and adding thousands upon thousands to the recruiting lists.

These assurances, Mr. Speaker, concerning the alleged objects of the war were of so broad and distinct a character that no man of well regulated mind could avoid confiding in them. For my own part, I relied as implicitly upon these solemn pledges as the magistrates of ancient Rome did on the sybilline books when danger pressed the eternal city. I should frankly have despised myself had I suffered a doubt to rise in my own mind as to the integrity of purpose which governed the action of the President. All that I paused to consider was, that when he took his oath of office he swore to maintain the Union and enforce the laws; that had he attempted to trifle with the sacred rights of the people, and allow a Government to be broken up which he had sworn to preserve, he would have acted contrary to the requirements of the Constitution, and deserved to be impeached. Upon these solemn convictions, I rallied all my feeble strength to the support of the Government, the Constitution, and the Union, looking upon secession as eternal war, and recognizing this great principle—that we are one people, that one we will remain, and one we will die.

I am well aware, sir, that my course in sustaining the war policy of the President has subjected me to considerable animadversion, and that my motives of action have frequently, and sometimes wickedly, been misconstrued by those who either could not understand the emergencies of the occasion, or who preferred seeing this great Republic split up into fragments rather than yield one iota of their prejudices. But, sir, there is one tribunal to which I appeal with feelings of pride and confidence from the judgment of disunionists: it is the tribunal of my conscience. The verdict which I find recorded there will sustain me under all calumnies and vituperations. When the day shall come for me to render an account of my stewardship to my constituents, I shall be able to show them that in denouncing treason and in sustaining the Government in its efforts to put down rebels in arms I have been true to myself, to my country, and to the sternest requirements of the Democratic creed. How much the Democratic party, acting as a party, through its organization, may do to bring back peace to the country, it is impos-

sible to predict. It will depend upon the steadiness with which it adheres to what are admitted to be Democratic principles. To expect to return to sound practices in the Government through the medium of a party which, from any suggestions of expediency, however plausible, departs from its principles, is, of all expectations, the most irrational. Peace will return; the war fury is a passion which exhausts itself. But however desirable peace may be, we ought to be united in the determination that when it comes it should bring with it the Union of the States under the Federal Constitution. Those who fail to recognize this national exigency are not imbued with the true spirit of Democracy; they have read the signs of the times to very little purpose. The Democratic party is essentially a party of progress, and those who aspire to be its leaders ought at least to have sense enough to know that we are in the midst of a great revolution, and that revolution is progress.

The only issue before the people at this time is the issue of Union or disintegration. I admit that the country needs peace, and I am anxious to secure it; but I do not want to get it by indirection. In my judgment, the only feasible plan of restoration is a vigorous prosecution of the war, or the proffer of conciliatory terms to those who are willing to renew their allegiance to the Federal Government. These are the only paths which lead to peace, and I want the people to understand the stern reality of the fact. It is a great mistake, sir, to suppose that political truth and naked fact are meat too strong for their digestion, and that the reality must be largely diluted with romance in order to render it palatable to them. I sincerely believe that the best way to deal with the people, in order to secure their support to a just cause, is to place before them the true issue in the distinctest manner. I believe, furthermore, that good causes have failed more frequently through the cowardice and double dealing of professed politicians, under the presumption that the people could only be made to do right by deceiving them and playing upon their prejudices, than from all other causes combined. In the hurry and spirit of the hour men are a little too apt to think doubt and consideration evidences of disloyalty, and caution and patience vices rather than virtues. This error has been made several times since the war began, and has resulted in great depression among the people, when the truth dispelled the brilliant anticipations of enthusiastic hopes.

It would seem to a superficial observer that rapid advances are being made in the overthrow of popular liberty, that the people are supine and indifferent on the subject, that one essential requisite after another of a popular government is being swept away into the mad vortex of fanaticism and passion, until hardly the form of our grand old fabric of constitutional liberty remains as a mournful memento of the glorious past. To those, however, who more critically analyze public events, it will be seen that all grave questions outside of the restoration of the Union have been merely postponed until the termination of the war. The people have been taught to revere the Constitution and the Union. The conviction of their judgment is that the structure of our Government is well adapted to develop the commercial, agricultural, and industrial resources of the country, and to promote the general prosperity and happiness. The Constitution in its operation prior to the rebellion contained every safeguard requisite for a prosperous career. The history of every nation demonstrates that its citizens will accept the form of government best calculated to give protection to person and property and to promote the general welfare. Trade, commerce, agriculture, and all the industrial pursuits, thrive under a stable government and languish and perish under the opposite one. Under the Constitution the equilibrium is well preserved. The passage of a law requires the co-operation of this honorable body, the Senate, and the Executive. If we pass an unconstitutional measure, the Senate operates as a check; if both bodies pass such an act, the President can veto it; if all co-operate, the Supreme Court can interpose its decision and declare the act void. I know of no nation in which the rights of the people are more carefully and admirably guarded. In addition, this is the only country in modern times that has thus far successfully demonstrated the capacity of the people for self government. This problem is now on trial. For these reasons, when the rebellion began, the people with great unanimity rallied to the support of the Government without respect to party; such unanimity continued until the prosecution of the war was diverted from the original object, the restoration of the Union, and a series of measures were inaugurated, such as confiscation, abolition, emancipation, suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus* in the loyal States, and others of a like character, which divided the North and united the South; abolitionism abolished slavery in the District of Columbia; confiscation merely enabled property to be confiscated in such parts of

the country as have been recovered from the rebels; the emancipation proclamation has done nothing more, as yet, than the legitimate operation of the war power would have achieved, that is, liberated slaves where the army has secured possession. It is evident, in my judgment, that the whole policy of the Government has been, since the adoption of the Crittenden resolution by this honorable body, to postpone indefinitely the close of the war. Entertaining these views, I deemed it my duty to oppose all these collateral issues, such as arbitrary arrests, confiscation, suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus*, and the freedom of the press in loyal States, and emancipation, as having a tendency to retard a successful issue to this most deplorable war.

Many honorable members of this House for whom I have great respect, supposed that these measures, great in themselves, and especially that of arbitrary arrests, were paramount in the public mind, and would overshadow all other questions. I concede the gravity of the point involved, but still, great as that and the other collateral issues are, the people regarded the life of the nation and the problem of self-government as paramount, and desired these issues first settled before permitting others to engross their attention. The Union restored or separation accomplished, these grave questions will then become a subject of serious inquiry, and the culpable parties be held responsible for the inroads made upon personal rights and liberty.

In addition to the series of measures to which I have referred, we are now called upon to sanction a joint resolution to amend the Constitution so that all persons shall be equal under the law, without regard to color, and so that no person shall hereafter be held in bondage. I might object to this amendment, sir, upon the ground that to prohibit the establishment or continuance of slavery as a legal relation would be virtually to admit that it may exist as such legal relation, and that such an admission in the Constitution would leave that instrument, in respect to human liberty, in a worse state than it is at present. Upon this point, however, I do not intend to enlarge; for, as I understand it, the fact of servitude among a people will be little affected by any provision which their constitution may or may not embody.

Sir, it would seem to me that the sum total of the wisdom of the ruling party is contained in the dogma that the negro is exactly like the white man. To some it may seem that this is not very much, hardly enough to constitute the foundation of a political system and an administration policy for a great nation and a numerous people; but this is a matter of opinion. Some may suppose that the basis of a political system ought—observing the uses of sciences in general—to be laid upon some fact, the existence of which is capable of demonstration; but, sir, we, the people of the United States, are trying great and sublime experiments in politics, and if we can succeed in making something stand upon nothing, will it not show that we are justly entitled to the reputation for political sagacity and adroitness which we have been considerably more ready to claim than the benighted statesmen of Europe have been willing to accord? So far as I can see, Mr. Speaker, in any form of civilization resembling our own, servitude will always exist; and servitude rendered necessary by circumstances which the servile party cannot control, is bondage. Bondage will differ in form, as it is modified by the character of the parties between whom it exists, and it will differ in intensity as it is affected more or less by external conditions. The relation of master and servant in the South is natural to this extent: it is the relation into which the white and black races, being brought together, naturally fell under the influences of mutual necessities for personal security, social tranquility, and subsistence. The relation of master and servant in Great Britain is affected by the pressure of a costly Government, which draws from labor, through capital, the means to defray its annual expenses. Servitudes differ in degree and they differ in kind, but the most important difference of the two—the one that is at once the most significant and the least changeable—is the difference in degree; a man may be nominally free, but if he is a workman without capital, and lives in a state of society of which it may be said "once a peasant, always a peasant; once a factory operative, always a factory operative;" if the constant labor of his body when in health is only just sufficient to provide him with food and clothing, and if old age, or a few days of illness, inevitably reduces him to pauperism or starvation, he has little to boast of his freedom, and would find it hard to discover wherein it ministers to his elevation or his happiness.

The freedom of a British working man consists in a limited liberty to change his employer. He is descended from ancestors who toiled as he toils, all their days for food, clothing, and shelter, and these scanty in quantity and poor in quality. He begets a

posterity to whom he transmits his poverty and his hopelessness, and his whole life, from his cradle to his grave, is one long, desperate struggle against starvation and nakedness. This is British liberty to a majority of the people of England. This is what it has been for hundreds of years, with no prospect of change but for the worse. Legislation has been tried abundantly, with a view to work improvements, and with worse than no avail. England has always had and now has her theorists who have labored to create imaginary Utopias, but that vast war debt, which, like a millstone, is grinding the people to powder, and pressing them into the earth, is a thing that cannot be lifted by constitutional clauses, or parliamentary expedients. That legislator will do well, Mr. Speaker, who can devise an amendment to the Constitution which shall relieve the people of the United States, without regard to color, from the pressure of a war debt larger in proportion to their resources than that of Great Britain. The debt is inevitable, it already exists, it is being increased with giddy rapidity. There is nothing in our institutions to prevent national indebtedness from producing the same effects upon the people of the United States that it has produced upon the people of Great Britain. Here is a thing, sir, which may well enlist the wisdom of the wisest statesmen of the country. If nature has made the negro different in any respect from the white man, all the constitutional clauses in the world will do nothing toward obliterating that difference. If it has made the negro like the white man, that likeness will at the proper time assert itself without constitutional assistance. Nature can neither be hindered nor accelerated by legislative contrivances, and no more than the European can the African be elevated to any valuable purpose by the will of another.

It was declared by me at the last session that for generations to come the laboring men of the United States would be required to work one or two hours in each day more than at present, in order to pay off the debt contracted by this war. Now, sir, under all the advantages afforded by a new country, and circumstances, in many respects, favorable to an extraordinary degree, the average laboring man of the United States has hitherto done little more than live. Impose upon him the necessity of two hours or of one hour additional labor per diem to support himself and his family, and he is, call him by what flattering title you may, a bondman. Against this bondage, the most hopeless and inexorable of all servitudes, no constitutional amendments, however cunningly devised, will afford security; it will descend from father to son, engraving, as it does in England, its characters, revolting and indelible, deeper and deeper upon each succeeding generation.

Mr. Speaker, if at a time when no causes of excitement were disturbing the minds of the people a despot had arisen over us, to decree and enforce upon the operative population of the United States two hours per day of additional labor for the remainder of their lives, what a cry would have gone up from all parts of the land against an act so tyrannical! What protest would have been entered by such, if any there were, who were permitted to discuss and condemn! What exhortations there would have been to combine for resistance, and what citations of principles against a domination so heartless and destructive! What pictures, at once true and revolting, would have been drawn of the degradation of the people, broken in spirit and pressed to the dust by excessive toil and intolerable exaction, and what fiery indignation would have been felt and expressed against the unnatural monster by whom the wrong was devised and executed! The result is not altered because we happen to reach it by a process less direct. The evil will be the same, the wrong the same, the same the suffering when the excitement has passed away and the fact remains, and we see it in its nakedness; but then, if it is not so now, it will be too late to permit the discovery to be of much avail.

Without pursuing this point, I would say that slavery has always been and is regarded as a domestic question. The right to abolish it does and ought to rest with the States in which it exists. Since the organization of the Government the law of climate and soil has controlled the subject, and has caused the abolition of slavery in six of the original States, and either abolished or prohibited it in all but nine of the new States since admitted. This Government is one of delegated powers, and those not conferred are reserved to the States respectively or to the people. In regard to slavery the Constitution is silent, and therefore no power exists to amend it in the respect indicated; and in addition, in my judgment, that instrument contemplated that all the States should participate in any amendment thereof. Sir, I do not stand here as the apologist of slavery, but merely to insist that we have no right to incorporate the proposed amend-

ment, and that even if the right exists it is a most injudicious time for the exercise of the power when we should desire to bring back the seceded States to loyalty and obedience. Our action in this respect cannot fail to add fuel to the flame, widen the breach already existing, further embitter the South, and prolong the sanguinary contest. I do not regard this question as having been decided by the late election. The issue there involved was the vigorous prosecution of the war for the restoration of the Union. Entertaining these ideas, I cannot vote for the proposed amendment.

Such are some of my views, Mr. Speaker, on some of the most important questions which agitate the public mind at this moment. If the war be brought to a close within a reasonable time, and a united country be the result, this great Republic, with its immense resources, will spring into new life, and under the blessed reign of peace will ultimately shake off its burdens and repose queen-like among the nations of the earth.

We must be prepared to make still greater sacrifices than any that have gone before, if necessary, to save the Union; but the considerations to which I have adverted admonish us, as I have observed already, not to prolong the war a moment longer than is necessary to effect the legitimate object. Let us be careful lest in seeking to obtain a fancied benefit for others we do not destroy ourselves. It has been justly said, sir, that to most men experience is like the stern-lights of a ship, which illumine only the track it has passed. It will be a sad thing for the Republic if those who have it in their power to control its destinies are recorded by history in such a category. On the use to be made hereafter of the light of experience depends our whole future destiny. It is to decide whether we take the first fatal step of disintegration which will lead us to the position of those petty States whose weight in the world's council is represented by a cipher, and whose little quarrels only provoke a smile, or whether we remain a great people—homogeneous, united and powerful.

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